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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000714

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINR PTER MCAP MARR FAIR IR LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: TRIPOLI MINISTER OF PARLIAMENT WARNS OF SUNNI EXTREMISM

REF: BEIRUT 713

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In a May 16 meeting, Sunni Member of Parliament Dr. Moustapha Allouch told Charge that the threat of Sunni extremism is on the rise in Tripoli since the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) failed to protect the Sunnis of Beirut during the Hizballah takeover of west Beirut on May 8 and 9. While the threat of extremism is very worrisome, the threat of the return of Syria is even more frightening. Allouch believes Hizballah is seeking a complete Iranian agenda in Lebanon and wants to establish an Islamic Republic. End Summary

¶2. (C) Charge, accompanied by Defense Attaché and Emboffs, met with Tripoli MP Moustapha Allouch, his brother Walid Allouch, and his son Mohammed Moustapha at his home in Tripoli, in north Lebanon.

MANY PEOPLE ARE ANGRY AND HUMILIATED  
THIS WILL CREATE MORE SUNNI EXTREMISM

¶3. (C) Dr. Allouch, fresh out of surgery where he completed two gall bladder procedures, addressed the issue of last week's violence in Bab At-Tabane straight away. In Bab At-Tabane, people not affiliated with the Future Movement attacked, and killed, some opposition members. Allouch told us that these attacks were a direct result of the LAF's inaction to quell the violence and lessen the tensions in the streets of northern Lebanon. Allouch said the Bab At-Tabane area is one of the poorest areas of Lebanon and is ripe for these kinds of clashes. He told us he knew this from first hand experience as he was originally from this area. Asked why he thought this incident occurred, Allouch told us it was because neither the LAF or the Future Movement protected the people, they felt threatened, and then chose to be proactive instead of reactive.

¶4. (C) More worrisome than the events in Tripoli, according to Allouch, is that the Future Movement was not seen as being able to protect people in Beirut. When Future Movement (FM) members went to Beirut to assist with the protection of FM offices, FM leaders in Beirut had no strategy and no weapons to give them. As such, they returned to Tripoli

"humiliated." Allouch surmises that there will be future inter-confessional conflict in Lebanon.

¶ 15. (C) In response to this humiliation, "the real problem of Salafists is starting to infiltrate our party." According to Allouch, the Salafists blame the FM members for the defeat of Fatah Al-Islam (FAI) at the Nahr Al Barid Palestinian refugee camp (just five kilometers north of Tripoli). These same Salafists tell FM members that FAI could have helped defeat the Shia attacks in Beirut. Allouch warned, "We have one third of our young people quitting school at twelve years old to join madrassas. This problem will knock on your door soon." Allouch told Charge that there are between twelve to forty former FM supporters (not members) that are ready to become suicide bombers. "Future Movement could have given them a strong leader, but now these young men see Future Movement as weak and humiliated."

WORST THING FOR TRIPOLI:  
THE RETURN OF SYRIA

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¶ 16. (C) As dangerous as the threat of Sunni extremism is for Tripoli, Allouch thinks the specter of Syria returning is even worse. Allouch is concerned that if the current political impasse in Beirut persists, this will give a green light for Syria to re-enter Lebanon and take over. "We are hearing rumors that they will come back if this situation escalates," said Allouch.

¶ 17. (C) Dr. Allouch recounted the 1986 massacre in which Syria

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killed 320 Tripolitans. "Now, it is our worst nightmare that they should come back." Citing fears that he would be the first one killed upon the Syrians' return, Dr. Allouch said that he will be ready to confront them, as will all of the Tripolitans. Allouch made it very clear that he sees the Sunnis of Tripoli as very different from the Sunnis of Beirut. "The people in Beirut are less assertive and less aggressive. We are a completely different group and will fight, hard," said Allouch.

HIZBALLAH HAS A PLAN TO TAKE  
OVER IN TWO TO FOUR YEARS

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¶ 18. (C) Allouch sees Hizballah's takeover of Lebanon culminating in two to four years. As a precursor to this, he sees the rise of Syria and Iran in Lebanon if, "nothing happens militarily against Syria and Iran, or if there is a peace deal in the region." Allouch thinks Hizballah is absolutely committed to the Iranian "vilayet e fagih" model of governance saying, "see, it is still in their literature. People should read!!" As such, the Syrian encroachment on Lebanon to make it part of greater Syria will pose a threat to Hizballah. The net effect of these competing aims will be to accelerate both sides' agendas. As their first step, Allouch is convinced that Syria will come to Tripoli.

SYRIA WILL TRY TO MAKE A  
DEAL WITH ISRAEL FOR WATER

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¶ 19. (C) Continuing his discussion of how Syria will attempt regain power in Lebanon, Allouch thinks the most probable, and likely ongoing, process is for Syria to make peace with Israel. Allouch asserts that Israel will gladly give Lebanon to Syria if Syria promises access to the 75 million liters of water Israel needs each day.

AL-QAEDA SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN  
THEY WILL WANT THEIR SHARE TOO

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¶ 10. (C) Last Friday in Tripoli, Sheikh Dahi Shehal, the

senior Sunni in Tripoli, gave a sermon at the noon prayers calling on Sunnis to organize against the infidel Shia. Allouch told us that this sermon was much more aggressive than in the past. Citing MP Mosbah Ahdab's ill-advised courtship with the Salafists, Allouch assesses that the Salafists are making inroads into moderate areas of Tripoli where they were once kept at bay (see reftel for 5/16 Ahdab conversation).

**¶11. (U) Biographic Information:**

Moustapha Allouch  
Member of Parliament 2005-present

Allouch, a Sunni Muslim, has been a member of the Future Movement since 1998. He entered Parliament in 2005. Allouch was born on July 24, 1958 in Tripoli. He holds an M.D. from the American University of Beirut and specialized in organ transplant at the University of Miami (1993). He is married and has three children. Allouch speaks Arabic, English, and French.

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